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Addendum

Annex [ ]

Summaries by the President of the Governing Council of the dialogue on the special theme of the twenty-fifth session, "The contribution of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme to the post-2015 development agenda in order to promote sustainable urban development and human settlements"

1. At its 5th and 6th plenary meetings, on Tuesday, 21 April 2015, the Governing Council held a dialogue on the special theme for the session, "The contribution of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) to the post-2015 development agenda in order to promote sustainable urban development and human settlements". The dialogue consisted of a keynote speech and a discussion session in the morning, followed by a discussion session and a closing session in the afternoon. The discussion sessions featured a moderator, Mark Eddo, presentations by a panel of speakers, comments from the floor and reactions from the panellists.

2. The 5th plenary meeting was opened by the President of the Governing Council, Ján Ilavský (Slovakia). Introductory remarks were then delivered by the Executive Director of UN-Habitat, Joan Clos, who underlined that, since the convening of the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) in 1995 and from the point of view of UN-Habitat, a revolution was under way that firmly established links between urbanization and development. He gave examples of several countries that had successfully implemented urban development strategies, which had resulted in economic growth. He noted that there were two sources of economic development stemming from urbanization: the first was based on rising property values and the development of land; the second was related to increased productivity of cities owing to the proximity of the factors of production and the increasing size of markets. Greater output therefore required less and less input, and the economic engine became more efficient. That notwithstanding, further study was needed to unequivocally establish a causal relationship between urbanization and wealth creation. UN-Habitat was closely following such research in order to transform it into successful policies.

A. Keynote speech

3. The keynote speech was delivered by the Director of the Indian Institute for Human Settlements and member of the Leadership Council of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, Aromar Revi.

4. In his speech, Mr. Revi said that, on a positive note, more than 350 cities, regional governments, international organizations, civil society organizations and universities had expressed

support for proposed goal 11 of the sustainable development goals. He identified four achievements in the context of sustainable urbanization: the emergence of global synergies between urban groups; proposed sustainable development goal 11; a growing recognition of the link between urbanization and localization; and the possible pathway to Habitat III through the third International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in Addis Ababa in July, the sustainable development goals and the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Paris in December. He also drew attention to the less encouraging developments of a loss of balance and synergy between the rural and the urban, a loss of urban productivity and employment, a fractured infrastructure mandate and an inadequate localization agenda that was in critical need of attention. He stressed that achieving sustainable urbanization would require reinvigorated political attention to the emerging urban governance framework, accelerated preparation for the implementation of proposed sustainable development goal 11, better understanding of new financing mechanisms and enhanced capacity at the national and local levels.

5. Stressing the role of cities as engines of inclusive growth and development, he drew attention to the enormous change in the world's population and the size of its economy since 1950 and future projections in that regard. Accompanying externalities, such as poverty, the growth of informal settlements and thus of the vulnerability of populations, risks from natural hazards, technology and climate change and the increasing potential for civil strife, tended to become concentrated in cities and posed significant challenges that must be tackled. Nonetheless, urban transformation was possible and had been achieved in several cities. It was also crucial to strike a balance between the urban and the rural, a particular challenge in countries where the percentage of urban dwellers was low. Turning to the question of the financing of sustainable urban development, he noted that the estimated annual financing requirement for the proposed infrastructure and water supply and sanitation sustainable development goals was between $0.7 trillion and $1.4 trillion. Private funding was essential to meet more than 50 per cent of the substantial projected costs. The world's financial architecture must be reformed to enable resources to be moved to appropriate areas.

6. He outlined the targets involved in achieving sustainable urbanization, saying that solutions were already in existence for each of them, albeit in various locations. It was possible to end extreme urban poverty, increase prosperity and reduce inequality.

7. He said that, in the lead-up to Habitat III, six key imperatives should be focused upon: to recognize cities and regions as key to the successful implementation of the sustainable development goals; to regard proposed sustainable development goal 11 as affording an opportunity to strengthen the economies, societies and policies of member States; to build a new architecture for decentralizing financing for development; to recognize the role of local governments and communities; to view cities as implementation forerunners at the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; and to establish a global geospatial monitoring and evaluation architecture. In conclusion, he emphasized the key relevance of innovative new global and local partnerships, the creation of employment and provision of services, investment in housing and infrastructure, and conditions of urban security, peace and safety, upon which the viability of sustainable urbanization depended.

Discussion

8. In response to a request to hear more about the integration of rural and urban architecture in the sustainable development goals, Mr. Revi noted that food security was critical and the situation might be exacerbated by future climate change. It was also crucial to ensure that the quality of rural life was maintained, focusing on health, education and access to the Internet, among other services. It was important, however, to have a framework that included both rural and urban areas to keep them in balance, which many Governments currently lacked.

9. Responding to a question about the role of civil society in the emerging framework of governance, Mr. Revi said that the sustainable development goals could not have been developed without the involvement of civil society actors. In addition to non-governmental organizations and universities, individuals who worked together in small groups to aid the poor and vulnerable were becoming more important. The current "twentieth century-based" framework made it difficult to accommodate civil society actors, but that situation needed to change. He also stressed the growing role of the media in working for change.

10. Expressing agreement with a participant who pointed out that inequality among citizens and the corruption of Governments were serious problems, Mr. Revi said that, if cities were not governed adequately, they could become places that brought down entire civilizations. Nevertheless, young people were currently more unwilling to accept inequality than their parents had been, as the Arab Spring had shown. The task was to create a framework that would allow change to happen.

11. In response to a participant who pointed out that negotiations would be needed between groups of people who had historically feared one another, Mr. Revi said that the world was changing rapidly and required new actors. It was important to be open to hearing new points of view.

12. The Executive Director added that it was important for central Governments to realize how much they affected local policies. Central Governments decided national policies on energy, water, infrastructure and funding that affected people at the local level, meaning that they needed to realize the effect that they had on the quality of local life.

B. Session 1: role of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme in the finalization, monitoring and implementation of the post-2015 development agenda

13. The panellists were the Honorary Vice-President of the Commonwealth Association of Planners, Christine Platt; the Deputy Secretary-General of United Cities and Local Governments, Emilia Sáiz; the Minister of Infrastructure of Rwanda, James Musoni; the Director of the Research Institute on Housing and Habitat, Ana Falú; and the Head of Division (Water, Urban Development, Transport), at the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany, Franz Marré.

1. Panellist presentations

14. In her presentation, Ms. Platt said that the international community needed to think about how sustainable urbanization could enhance national resource mobilization for the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda. To achieve the sustainable development goals, which were bold and overarching, there was a need for strategic implementation processes. At the third session of the World Urban Forum, held in Vancouver, Canada, in 2006, urban planning had been reinvented, with the emergence of new principles and tools for tackling key urban challenges. In addition, Governing Council resolution 24/3 on inclusive and sustainable urban planning and the elaboration of international guidelines on urban and territorial planning, together with the position paper prepared for the World Planners Congress entitled "Reinventing planning: a new governance paradigm for managing human settlements", had provided frameworks and guiding principles for the delivery of sustainable urbanization and been instrumental in defining the roles of key stakeholders. It was clear from the discussions at the second session of the Preparatory Committee for Habitat III and the opening meeting of the current session that government positions were changing and that stakeholder mobilization had begun in earnest.

15. Ms. Sáiz, in her presentation, focused on what she identified as the need for greater power-sharing and political dialogue to attain the sustainable development goals. Although the agenda of Habitat II had been visionary in the way in which it looked at the role of partners – indeed, never before had so much importance been given to strengthening ties between the United Nations family, Governments and stakeholders – not enough had changed since. Stressing that local authorities had a vital role to play in localizing the implementation of the sustainable development goals, she said that Governments, local authorities, development partners and civil society, including women and young people, should begin working together immediately.

16. In his presentation, Mr. Musoni pointed out that urbanization had the potential to lead to long-lasting economic transformation and prosperity, facilitate investment and maximize human capital development. Several factors were essential to achieving urbanization, including political commitment. His Government was committed to increasing the percentage of people living in urban areas to 30 per cent by 2020 and had set up a steering committee on human settlements with a view to creating safe, resilient and well-governed cities. Nevertheless, as the President of Rwanda had previously stated, it was not so much a question of choosing whether to urbanize, but of choosing how to manage urbanization. Noting that the Government of Rwanda was taking a proactive and long-term approach, he said that it was working with local governments and authorities, the private sector, development partners, donors, academic institutions and other stakeholders to design a sustainable urban development strategy, with a focus on promoting economic growth and minimizing negative externalities. Key considerations included urban finance, environmental planning and the provision of public services such as health care and education. He added that urban development could not be looked at in isolation from rural development, which was why there was also a need to create adequate links between urban and rural areas.

17. Focusing in her presentation on gender issues in the sustainable urban development context, Ms. Falú said that women and girls had been largely left out of the Habitat Agenda. Stressing that there was a need to integrate all social actors into the dialogue on sustainable urban development, she said that women had significant knowledge to offer and were critical to the attainment of the

sustainable development goals because of their vital contribution to society. Moreover, to be effective, no agenda could afford to ignore half the world's population. She added that poverty was not simply a question of income, but also related to issues such as security and access to decent public services. Many challenges remained, such as the fact that poor women had twice as many babies as wealthier women and that many women were trapped in low-paid jobs. Lastly, she called for gender-disaggregated data to be produced.

18. In his presentation, speaking about the drivers of unsustainable urbanization, Mr. Marré said that there was a need for more information, education and incentives to encourage sustainable development. UN-Habitat should focus on the post-2015 development agenda as a whole, not simply proposed goal 11 of the sustainable development goals. Calling for monitoring of the implementation of the goals through indicators, he said that the post-2015 development agenda would be successful only if adequate structures and frameworks were developed. He also stressed the need to stop focusing solely on the resources required to implement the goals; while a sound financial architecture was important, the first step was to discuss the goals themselves.

19. The Executive Director added that there was a need for a new set of indicators and that dialogue was under way with Governments to develop a fact-based monitoring system, so that discussions could be based on the reality on the ground, rather than on assumptions.

2. Discussion

20. In the ensuing discussion, there was general agreement on the importance for sustainable urbanization of good governance, inclusiveness, transparency, broad stakeholder participation, defined roles for key actors and citizen ownership. The importance of collaborative efforts between all spheres of government and other partners, together with the promotion of inclusion through improved access for all to all parts of cities such that every citizen could benefit, were underscored.

21. One participant said that there was a need to tackle mobility and road safety, gender equality and the rights of children and people with disabilities in proposed sustainable development goal 11in order to ensure inclusive human settlements. Another stressed the importance of including social justice in the post-2015 development agenda to avoid the radicalization of marginalized segments of society and greater division between the rich and the poor, leading to increased social conflict. Another said that urban issues should be considered from a cultural perspective. The importance of information, knowledge, appropriate and strong leadership and political will in sustainable urban development was emphasized. Noting an alarming increase in poverty, he drew attention to the gaps in levels of income, inequalities and differences in economic systems that underlay that scourge and suggested that the use of local resources by local authorities were key in combating it.

22. One participant said that the exclusion of young people from democratic processes was an obstacle to harnessing their potential to act as agents of positive change. She expressed the view that young people should be formally represented in governance structures and United Nations activities. The inclusion of young people was seen as vital for the attainment of the proposed sustainable development goals.

23. Responding to a comment on the vulnerability of women being caused by the situations in which they lived, rather than the fact of their gender, and a question about the availability of new tools to combat gender inequality and social isolation that affected so many women, one panellist said that, in the context of urbanization, women were vulnerable for various reasons, including displacement and poverty. She advocated incentives to combat gender inequality, providing positive action for greater equitability. She also stressed that there was a need to give voices to the people who lived in and built cities and to provide resources, knowledge and mechanisms for control and monitoring.

24. The Executive Director drew attention to the particular situation of internally displaced persons and refugees as a result of conflict, which had an impact on land use, and he emphasized that the resettlement of displaced populations was a phenomenon that planners should consider. He cited the example of Darfur, where the urbanization rate was significantly higher than that in the whole of the Sudan. There were huge waves of migration under way in the Middle East as people sought to escape from conflicts. It was important to consider the relationship of refugee camps with the sustainability of the adjacent urban areas and regions.

25. A representative of a non-governmental organization working in Darfur indicated that migration as a result of drought was another factor that had driven people in Darfur to urban areas. In response to those particular planning challenges, a regional plan was being developed with assistance from UN-Habitat and with the participation of local governments and internally displaced persons. A key component of the plan was a training course for internally displaced persons, which assisted them

in the acquisition of technology for the production of environmentally friendly, locally available, and affordable building materials.

26. One panellist, emphasizing that no single solution would meet all needs, said that on the basis of lessons learned it was clear that responses to the challenges of urbanization should be built from the bottom up, with all spheres of government fully aware of their commitments and the allocation of responsibilities. She emphasized the need to reclaim the draft sustainable development goals as a whole; proposed goal 11 could not respond to all the concerns of local governments and the challenges of the new urban agenda. It did not, for example, deal with the urban-rural challenge. She urged that the issues of localization, the need for the redesign of existing financial mechanisms, local taxation, improved access to financial mechanisms by local government, means of strengthening creditworthiness and the need for resources to fund the immediate challenges of urban areas should be considered at the third International Conference on Financing for Development.

27. One participant expressed the view that urban planning represented a powerful tool for sustainable development; smart solutions in cities could avoid ineffective and unsustainable patterns of development. Sustainable cities and human settlements must be well recognized in the proposed sustainable development goals and post-2015 development agenda – cities, towns and municipalities were key arenas for the implementation of the proposed goals. She expressed thanks to UN-Habitat for localizing commitments and underscored the need for adequate monitoring and measurement of progress in the implementation of the agenda. Expressing appreciation to UN-Habitat for its work on indicators, she said that such efforts should be broad-based and include various actors with different areas of expertise. She suggested that, to keep the number of targets manageable, there was a need for multi-focus indicators.

28. One participant, welcoming the proposed sustainable development goals and targets, noted the strong link between human settlements, urban and territorial planning and sustainable development, including poverty alleviation and environmental protection. Economic growth required social inclusion and environmental sustainability. UN-Habitat had a significant role to play in the discussions on the post-2015 development agenda and he commended the Programme's efforts to date in that regard. UN-Habitat would also be a key actor in monitoring the implementation of the post-2015 targets and rendering technical assistance to member States.

29. One participant said that UN-Habitat work on the City Prosperity Index might be interesting for the post-2015 context. She sought clarification on work carried out to date with local and national governments to support monitoring and reporting systems, and on lessons learned in planning a monitoring system for the post-2015 context.

30. Responding to a request for clarification regarding the selection of secondary cities in the 30 districts of Rwanda, Mr. Musoni said that six Rwandan cities had been selected for accelerated urbanization and, therefore, an increased level of funding. The criteria for selection had been their current level of development, their potential for growth, including with regard to industries, trade, education and health, employment opportunities and geographical location, in particular their potential for spreading outwards. Once the criteria for a selection had been fulfilled, the process for approval had been set in motion, a technical team had been established to make the proposal and discuss the matter in a local government forum, the Cabinet had approved the selection and implementation had begun.

31. The Executive Director said that, in addition to the official process whereby member States would decide on a framework of indicators, UN-Habitat was developing its own technical indicators and working with academic institutions in the lead-up to Habitat III to produce new tools of measurement. One such tool looked at expenditure per inhabitant at the local authority level by country, demonstrating a massive disparity between countries.

32. One panellist called for indicators that could measure the progress in achieving the targets of the post-2015 development agenda comprehensively. Indicators were often focused on technical issues, whereas what truly mattered was the measurement of aspects such as poverty reduction, the health status of populations and access to education and employment. The development and availability of data at the local level were key in that regard.

3. Closing remarks

33. In his closing remarks, Mr. Revi called for fundamental cultural and social change in order to achieve sustainable urbanization in the face of the sheer volume of people on Earth. Resources would be critical in that regard. He said that, at the third International Conference on Financing for Development, stakeholders must call for local resources to be raised and capacity built to enable all levels of government to act; there was a need for innovative financial mechanisms and an alternative

financial architecture. The way forward to Habitat III must be considered politically in order to avoid a meaningless outcome of the Conference and an explosive growth in the number of slum dwellers living in poverty.

C. Session 2: exploring strategies, challenges and approaches with regard to urban-rural linkages

34. The panellists for the session were the Principal Researcher and Co-Head of the Human Settlements Group at the International Institute for Environment and Development, Cecilia Tacoli; the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Local Government of Uganda, Patrick Mutabwire; and the Mayor of Seferihisar, Turkey, Mustafa Tunc Soyer.

35. Opening the session, the Deputy Executive Director, recalling the keynote speech, said that rural and urban development were two sides of the same coin. Even though Africa was experiencing one of the fastest rates of urbanization in the world, most of its population continued to live in rural settings. The results of successful rural development included production surpluses, and there was a need for better infrastructure to allow small-scale industries to service those surpluses. Ultimately, those results all led to urbanization. When urbanization was viewed as a cycle, rather than as a competition, significant challenges such as food security and health-care provision could also be tackled successfully. Well-planned urbanization was most effective when there were strong links between all types of human settlements, from cities to villages. By contrast, megacities had sometimes failed under the weight of their own success and through a lack of national regulation and planning. It was time to move towards forms of international planning that could pay dividends for both urban and rural communities.

1. Panellist presentations

36. In her presentation, Ms. Tacoli said that a better understanding of rural areas was needed. Changes in agricultural production methods, non-agricultural employment and the numbers of rural inhabitants who bought, rather than produced, their own food were both an opportunity and a cause for concern. The key to making urban-rural linkages a reality lay in small towns, given that that was where the two population groups intersected spatially. Small towns provided a space in which the human rights of those in small-town and rural settings could be upheld. Nevertheless, their success could be damaged if, for example, industries that added value to raw agricultural products were not fostered. Current information about small towns covered settlements with between 20,000 and 500,000 inhabitants. More detailed data were needed to distinguish the types of settlement within that broad category in order to identify the development needs of each type and to mobilize the most appropriate level of government to meet those needs. Governments were particularly hampered by the lack of information about economic activity in small towns. By contrast, it was clear that a lack of revenue, technical resources and accountability in local administrations was inhibiting progress towards environmental sustainability.

37. Mr. Mutabwire, in his presentation, said that local authorities in Uganda had traditionally focused on service provision and local construction planning. Urban-rural connectivity could be improved if they gave more weight to economic planning: improvements might include a decrease in rural-urban migration and an increase in the contributions of rural areas and small towns to national economic well-being. In terms of knowledge and skills, Uganda was investing in leadership training for local authorities. The country's policy of decentralization, with the provision of predictable and adequate central government funding at its heart, was helping to build know-how and competence within local administrations. The improvement of governance structures at the village, town, municipality and city levels had helped to structure economic planning and prevent such negative consequences of urbanization as the development of slums. Infrastructure planning, especially regarding road construction in rural and urban contexts, remained important, as did the ability to measure and review progress. Annual assessments currently considered the performance of a local authority in terms of financial planning, gender and environmental issues.

38. Mr. Tunc Soyer gave a presentation about an urban-rural food cooperation initiative that had developed in the town of Seferihisar under his mayorship. He said that two important groups in the food production chain – urban consumers and rural producers who used traditional farming methods – had recently been separated by modern food production, including genetic modification and large-scale, intensive farming. To recreate the bond between urban consumers and rural producers, a cooperative had been formed and had established a producers' market. Stallholders were permitted to sell only food that they had produced themselves, providing urban consumers with the opportunity to support local producers. In return, local producers were exempt from municipal taxes on products sold in the market. A local seed bank had also been established to reduce dependence on genetically modified seeds from afar. An online market had been set up to enable producers to sell to customers

nationwide. The project encouraged small-scale agricultural activity based on the formation of cooperative groups, the production of value-added items such as preserves and juices, as well as raw food produce, and the use of local seeds. The initiative had enabled the local authorities to connect to global networks of other local authorities and to share best practice on issues of common interest.

39. Responding to a question about how UN-Habitat could support similar locally relevant initiatives, the Executive Director said that the Programme envisaged a future in which rural-urban linkages became more fluid. Experience showed that that could not be achieved by chance: strong national policies were needed, together with the resources and means for effective implementation. Successful policies of that sort were not self-evident, they required proper financing, political will to make difficult decisions and robust national-level debate. It was important to strike a careful balance between rural and urban development needs to ensure that the benefits of one were not sacrificed for the sake of progress in the other.

40. One panellist noted that it was becoming more difficult to give a voice to local communities, including by harnessing rather than prohibiting current informal activities. Information gathered in 2013 suggested that most countries were pursuing policies that discouraged rural-urban migration. In addition, support for commercial farming in recognition of an ever-growing world population sometimes led to incoherent policies regarding other sectors of the rural economy.

41. Asked why there was no rural-focused equivalent of proposed sustainable development goal 11, the Executive Director responded that rural development and infrastructure investment had historically dominated the development debate, with few resources devoted to urbanization and little thought given to its transformative qualities. It was important to correct that situation and to make clear that urbanization was a development tool that could increase national economic well-being.

2. Discussion

42. In the ensuing discussion, one participant pointed out that, although his organization had launched several continuing professional development programmes over the previous few years, it had become apparent that, unless Governments paid sufficient attention to research and development and helped to develop the local content that would create opportunities and employment, cities would be unable to succeed. In addition, a lack of participatory planning at the grass-roots level could only lead to failure, as the rapid decline of some newly urbanized areas into slums had shown. At Habitat III, the participants should look at the world's continents and ask what urbanization actually meant. His organization had sought to appeal to young architects across its member countries, but the prevailing view was that only European or United States architecture qualified as truly urban. That meant that, in the absence of a greater focus on home-grown solutions, a continent such as Africa would forever be playing catch-up.

43. Referring to local initiatives, one panellist said that when designing solutions there was a need to understand the context for which they were intended. In Uganda, for example, people lived in urban areas but their cultural values were often rural. Failure to grasp that aspect could only lead to problems. A more local approach could help to reduce friction, for example in the implementation of legislation and justice.

44. Another panellist said that the time was ripe to move on from the notion of citizens' rights being linked to where they lived. There was often anxiety that too many people might be moving into large cities, frequently losing sight of the fact that the process was also occurring in reverse, with many people moving to small or intermediate urban centres and subsequently continuing the journey outwards as new forms of technology opened up new types of mobility. Protecting citizens' rights locally remained important, but protection was also required across national and regional boundaries. In some countries, for example, inclusion on the electoral roll was dependent on having an address, which meant that slum dwellers were unable to exercise their citizenship rights.

45. One participant stressed that the concept of urban-rural linkages must be underpinned by political, economic and social considerations. In Kenya, for example, the people had decided to devolve delivery of services to the county level. The counties had thus become the new centres of urbanization, where people made the decisions about the matters affecting them. A key issue, however, was how the relationship between county and national authorities could be energized and synergized in order to bring an element of equity to the provision of services.

46. One panellist said that transferring resources was not the end of the matter. The key challenge was how to transform the resources into capacities through judicious planning.

47. Another participant raised the critical issue of AIDS and cities. While urbanization created opportunities, urban spaces were home to young, mobile and diverse populations who were especially

vulnerable. Cities were often disproportionately affected by the HIV epidemic, and when people were not registered as permanent residents they often had difficulty in gaining access to basic health services. In that context, he added, cities would struggle to contain the epidemic unless effective actions were taken to deal with the threat to public health.

48. Responding to a comment about some developed countries having smaller cities, the Executive Director said that the urbanization model in Europe had evolved over many centuries and smaller cities currently tended to be found in the richest countries. That was because people in rich countries could afford to return to smaller towns and pay for access to the modern services that they required, which was not the case in countries with a low per capita income. The lifestyle of some European cities, however, was not sustainable because their contribution to greenhouse gas emissions was extremely high. The urbanization model needed to be reviewed in some parts of the world, whereas in developing countries urbanization was essential, because cities were where advanced services had emerged. He also pointed out that most highly developed European countries had previously had to endure poor urban conditions.

49. One participant expressed the view that UN-Habitat policymakers would do well to bear in mind that urbanization, while probably inevitable, must not come at the expense of the rural environment.

D. Session 3: priorities in operationalizing urban-rural linkages approaches

50. The panellists for the session were the Minister of Housing and Urban Development of Cameroon, Jean-Claude Mbwentchou; the Executive Director of the Mazingira Institute and former President of the Habitat International Coalition, Davinder Lamba; and the Executive Director of the Economic Performance and Development Unit at the Human Sciences Research Council, Ivan Turok.

1. Panellist presentations

51. In his presentation, Mr. Mbwentchou noted that the development of cities depended on the development of rural areas, especially in developing countries. In 2004, his country had made urban planning a high priority and had given mayors a leading role in the creation of plans for both small and large cities. Cameroon had 360 communes and, with the assistance of international development partners, had drawn up development plans for them and created national structures to support them on issue such as land, housing and project execution. The Government had also received support from UN-Habitat in its efforts to develop, renovate and restructure cities, train mayors, undertake planning-related public consultations, make cities safer, and work towards the elimination of slums.

52. He said that the support provided by UN-Habitat and other agencies had enabled Cameroon to set up programmes aimed at achieving a more balanced development between rural and urban areas, and it was important for UN-Habitat to continue to support local communities and governments in their efforts to develop urban and rural policies and strategies and sustainable territorial development plans. The financial resources required for their implementation could be obtained through local housing and infrastructure permit schemes, and through international development partners that, in providing their support, could help to discourage large-scale migration to developed countries.

53. Mr. Lamba, in his presentation, stressed that, for UN-Habitat and its partners to contribute to ensuring respect for human rights throughout the settlement continuum, it was necessary for them to develop a plan of action and a strategy to engage effectively in the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda, including proposed sustainable development goal 11, in the context of the rural-urban continuum. Such engagement should be guided by ethical principles such as social justice, human dignity and human rights, human security and humanitarian engagement and environmental security and sustainability. The two last-mentioned sets of issues had, he added, not been sufficiently considered in the context of the urban agenda discussions to date. He also suggested that State and non-State actors should deliberate on the proposed plan of action and strategy before and during the eighth session of the World Urban Forum.

54. Responding to the presentation, the Executive Director said that the framework of the new urban agenda was being structured around the contribution of urbanization to the three key objectives of sustainable development, tackling the challenge posed by climate change and furthering the social agenda of the United Nations, including respect for human rights.

55. In his presentation, Mr. Turok discussed the role of national policies in framing efforts around the rural-urban agenda, suggesting that the political boundaries that defined rural and urban areas were in fact not clear and that that reality required flexible governance arrangements recognizing the mutual dependence and interconnectedness of various types of settlements. National urban policies had a crucial role to play in the rural-urban agenda, which derived from their ability to convey to all

segments of society, including the private sector, the centrality of urbanization to the development agenda; to promote better coordination among levels of government dealing with issues such as housing, transport and infrastructure and thereby help to create functional settlements; and to empower localities and regions with legal, planning and financial tools to enable them to manage urbanization more effectively, thereby moving beyond administrative silos and narrow territorial boundaries.

56. He said that the urban-rural agenda did not entail treating all places as equivalent, but rather recognizing the different functions of different places in the planning and resource allocation processes. Large cities provided significant economic opportunities, while smaller cities and towns were less costly and congested and could play a role in economic growth, provided that they had adequate infrastructure. As to rural areas, they afforded major opportunities in sectors other than agriculture, including renewable energy, in particular wind and solar energy, and tourism.

2. Discussion

57. In the ensuing discussion, one participant suggested that there was a need to challenge the notion that ruralism was negative and urbanization positive, stating that the opposite was often true, given that rural areas did not create negative effects of urbanization such as high greenhouse gas emissions, deforestation and slums. Another participant suggested that there was a need for a paradigm shift to move beyond the rural-urban dichotomy and for the adoption of policies and streamlined governance structures premised on the interdependence of and linkages between rural and urban areas.

58. One panellist expressed agreement with the notion that it was desirable not to create opposition between rural and urban areas, noting that one of the first reforms undertaken by his country had been to eliminate the categorization of some communes as being rural. It was important not to neglect rural areas and to provide housing, transport and mobility to rural and urban dwellers and employment opportunities for people close to where they lived.

59. Another panellist said that the creation of a hierarchy between the rural and the urban was no longer useful to achieve positive change, suggesting that what was instead required was the establishment of clear goals and principles and the further study of the various aspects of the rural-urban continuum, including ecological, technological, built environment, political, demographic, economic and cultural aspects, on the basis of which diagnoses could be made and solutions identified.

60. Sharing the experience of his country, in which rural governments were having difficulty in providing basic services to rural populations owing to a decline in tax revenue resulting from increased rural-to-urban migration, one participant asked whether similar examples existed elsewhere.

61. One panellist responded that South Africa, albeit for other reasons, had created large metropolitan municipalities in an effort to manage the tensions between rural and urban areas within a single entity. While the approach had created an opportunity to share city resources and the capacity of city councils with rural areas and resulted in more cost-effective delivery of basic services to remote rural areas, it also entailed risks, such as the political risk associated with spreading core city revenue across a large territory, which could undermine the prosperity and infrastructure of core cities, and a risk of sending a message to the central Government that the new entity had a sufficiently large tax base and that it no longer required national transfers.

62. The Executive Director said that the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland had adopted innovative legislation in 1979 that had defined municipalities on the basis of their population, rather than their land area, which had led to significant changes in the configuration of local authorities, including a considerable reduction in their number. Land issues were a highly sensitive political matter, however, meaning that they were likely to be resolved in the context of national political processes, irrespective of any technical solution that might be devised in the context of the current rural-urban linkage debate.

63. In response to a question regarding the ability of cities to cope with migrant flows, one panellist said that it was important to distinguish between those who migrated by choice and those who were forced to migrate owing to conflict or natural disasters. The latter kind of migration should be discouraged, given that it was difficult for any city or country to accommodate such large-scale migration. Another panellist suggested that the principles of international humanitarian law would apply in cases of forced migration, which were expected to increase.

64. The Executive Director said that there was a need to defend the freedom of people to move to cities, noting that cities had been, historically, places of migration.

E. Closing session

65. Ms. Platt summarized the six key areas that had been discussed, highlighting the main areas of convergence and describing potential ways forward.